

**Exploratory Report for the Creation on the Position of Town  
Administrator**

**Created by 2014 Town Administrator Study Committee**

**Special Town Meeting Fall 2014**

## Overview

As Petitioned and approved during the 2014 Annual town meeting The Board of selectman have appointed a exploratory committee for the purpose of studying and reporting back to the town during the 2014 Fall Special Town meeting the position on Town Administrator.

## Process

During the time between the Annual Town Meeting and now the Town Administrator Exploratory Committee consisting of: One member of the Board of Selectmen (BOS), one member of the finance committee, one town employee, two at large citizens and one at large citizen alternate have conducted detailed research over one hundred and fifty man hours in sessions and an indeterminate number of hours devoted to communication with other municipalities, composing minutes and drafting final report, including but not limited to the following;

- Interviewing Board of Selectmen from other towns that currently have the position of Town Administrator, Town Manager or Town Secretary. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into;
  - the value added through this position
  - the overall dynamics of this position with the BOS, town departments and the at large community
  - process and approach utilized in creation and execution on the position
  - overall cost associated with this position
  - and general opinions of the effect this position has had on the towns.
- Interviewing of individuals holding/held the position in other MA towns of Town Administrator, Town Manager or Town Secretary. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into;
  - Required skills and background required to hold this position
  - the overall dynamics of this position with the BOS, town departments and the at large community
  - value created by their position
  - approach in dealing with other town departments
  - cost associated with this position
  - typical process and experiences in their role
- Conducted interviews with existing Dighton Town Department Heads, town counsel and BOS members to gain insight into;
  - How position can/could affect their role and department within the day to day operations of the town.
  - general opinions and conversation on potential value and risk of creation of position
  - and receive input on how this position should be structured
- Held open town forum to field questions and comments from at large town citizens on topics involving the potential creation of the position of Town Administrator.

- Reviewed and discussed publically available case studies, articles, reports, contracts and job descriptions concerning the topic of the Town Administrator positions.
  - Gained insight into why other towns have selected to implement this role
  - provided ability to identify key responsibilities and activities this role could be responsible for.
  - gave point of reference for contractual relationship between various towns and there professional staff including financials, term, termination rights and responsibilities.
  - Provided factual evidence on history and evolution of this position within this State.

## **Findings Summary**

Under Section C. 41 Annotated Laws of Massachusetts Sub Section 23A. Executive Secretary or Town Administrator; Appointment by Selectmen, a town has been given the authority by vote or by-law to authorize and empower the selectmen to appoint an executive secretary or town administrator who may be appointed by them for a term of one or three years and remove him at their discretion. This position shall be under the authority and direction of the BOS and shall hold no elected office, but may be appointed by the selectmen or, with their approval, by any other town officer, board, committee or commission, to any other town office or position consistent with his office. The BOS shall have the sole right to appoint this position.

Following creation of the above noted statute according to the Massachusetts Municipal Directory, Forms of Municipal Government published by the Massachusetts Municipal Association a large number of communities across Massachusetts have institute a form of government with a Town Administrator and/or Town Manager. Dighton is included in a handful of hold out communities without a form of government including a position consistent with the statute.

Through this committee's research and studies it has become clear Dighton is in a unique situation with a BOS dedicated to their role and the community at a level far in excess of the roles compensation and typical expectations. This has enable Dighton to reach its current state without the creation or adoption of this statute. At the town's current growth rate and adoption of the towns Master Plan it is prudent to evaluate if our current form of government is best suited for the future evolution of the town.

Based on the committee's findings the role of Town Administrator under the control and empowered by the BOS in essence professionalizes town government. Through task and duties assigned by the elected BOS the role of an appointed contracted Town Administrator shall be empowered by the BOS to act on the towns behalf in execution of day to day town management activities. This may include if the BOS assign such task but not limited to, annual budget preparation and oversight, grant review/applications/and research, day to day HR responsibilities of the town, contract negotiation on behalf of the town, meeting preparation, town government process review, procurement operations of the town and a liaison between the town/BOS/outside agencies/and other groups as required.

This position is compensated based on several factors including tasks and responsibilities assigned to the role by the BOS, experience and background of the individual filling the position, financial condition of the town and location/demographics of the town. Other financial and logistical consideration shall be considered in creation of the position including additional administrative expenses and logistical considerations for hiring, placement and initial execution of the role.

## **Key Factors**

The committee has identified several key factors and information for the town to consider in review of this position.

### **1. *Job Description***

- a. The job description for this role shall be defined following approval of this position in accordance with the statute by the BOS including duties and responsibilities in a dynamic and flexible manner to allow the BOS and appointed individual within the role to implement the position in a way most suitable and reaping the greatest value for the town.

### **2. *Selection and Appointment process***

- a. Following approval by the town of creation of this position the BOS shall have the authority to fill the position in accordance with the statute. The BOS shall have the ability to delegate/involve a search and selection committee within the selection process in accordance with the statute. The BOS shall have the authority to negotiate a contract between the town and the selected individual to be put into effect at the annual town meeting by appropriation.

### **3. *Compensation/Benefits/Cost***

- a. Following approval by the town of creation of this position the BOS shall have the ability consistent with the statute to select a candidate and negotiate a contract in line with the job description, experience and background of the selected candidate. Based on information collected by this committee this position shall be nonunion and have a salary in the range of eighty to one-hundred thousand dollars. It is the opinion of this committee we could not unfairly limit the pool of potential applicants or required skills/experience at this time by defining hours, background and experience for this position to further pinpoint the potential salary requirements.
- b. Additional Administrative cost upon creation of this position shall/may include; initial onetime expense of creation of office space or relocation of current town departments, annual office supplies budget, benefit and retirement contributions and IT related expenses and equipment. Based on a single point of information provided by a neighboring town these annual expenses can be expected to be in the range of nine and one-half thousand annually.

- c. Following creation of this position it is to be explored reallocating/reassigning the current BOS Secretary position to the Town Administrator to be a shared resource by the BOS and Town Administrator. It shall also be explored some responsibilities currently residing with the BOS and/or the BOS Secretary being reassigned. This may include such activities as money collection/sale of trash bags being assigned to other town bonded personnel.

#### **4. Removal Process**

- a. Consistent with the statute in the event of required removal of the individual appointed by the BOS within the term of the contract the BOS shall have the right to remove such individual consistent with the contract between the town and such individual. Based on this committees research this may include financial compensation to such individual based on reason for removal, contractual agreement, vested retirement benefits and/or severance.

#### **5. BOS/Administrator Dynamics**

- a. Town Administrator shall work under authority and direction of the BOS and shall have no power not granted to the individual by the BOS.
- b. It is believed based on our research the Town Administrator role has the ability to create a point on consistency/continuity across elected town official terms for process, information and program/project follow through.
- c. Utilizing the MMA model this position has the ability to create a culture and vision within town government resembling a professional environment with the BOS acting as the Board of Directors and the Town Administrator acting as the Chief Administrative Officer.

#### **Further Required Points of Clarification**

This committee is in agreement if the town approves the creation of this position several factors still require further exploration by the Town Administrator including;

- Placement/location of this individual within town hall
- Efficient reconfiguration of town government activities.

#### **TOWN OF DIGHTON TOWN ADMINISTRATOR STUDY COMMITTEE**

PATRICK W. MENGES, Chairman

WENDELL L. H. CARR

DONALD E. FRENCH

THOMAS M. MEDEIROS

PETER ROACHE, Clerk

GARY SCOTT DINGUS, Alternate